

It has its purpose but it is unfit for human habitation. You might travel through it. It has hunger. It is a testing ground. And it will test your obedience. Now the children of Israel took a three day journey beyond the Red Sea, and God told them what he required. If thou would diligently harken to the voice of the Lord, thy God, and will do that which is right in his sight - and will give ear to his commandments and keep all his statutes. Exo. 15:26. They were to obey.

On this same journey, the second month following - their escape from Egypt. God demanding their obedience again. That I may prove them whether they will walk in my law or not. Ex. 16:4.

During the third month of their journey, God asked them to obey again. Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice, indeed, and keep my covenant, then you shall be a peculiar treasure, unto me above all people. Ex. 19:5.

Remember Israel had been obedient enough to be delivered from Egypt.

But this generation of Israelites never did enter the promised land because they never fully obeyed. Numbers 14:22-24.

They obeyed God to a point. Now the wilderness uncovered certain weak spots, in their lives. And the places where the devil snared them -- first, they murmured and complained of hardships. Ex. 16:2-3.

Second, they lusted. Numbers 11:4.

Third, they turned again to idols. Ex. 32:1.

They were besetting oft re-occurring sins. Which that generation never conquered.

Do you still have weak spots in your life where obedience is impossible in your own strength. That is what the wilderness is for - to reveal these major weaknesses. And unless Israel can get across, then there is no hope. Now you can get victory in these areas if you will recognize your weaknesses. God will patch them up.

The wilderness is not only a testing place - it is a place for triumph. The question is how do you fully obey. How do you get victory over besetting sins. How do you rid yourself of disobedience. How do you clean out your life.

The illustration is found in Romans 6. I think it is the greatest passage in the Bible on this, to help one secure victory over his besetting sins. God promises to set you free from every enslavement to any sin. V. 16 - Know this, that our old man is crucified with him. And henceforth, we shall not serve sin.

V. 12 Let not sin therefore reign.

V. 14 For sin shall not have dominion over you.

One word of caution, this passage does not teach sinless perfection. It does not say that you will never sin again. The Bible speaks very specifically on this. I John 1:8 - if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

However, what it does promise is freedom from besetting sin. You never need to be a servant or a slave to sin, any sin. There is no sin that can reign in your life. There is no sin that shall have dominion over you. There is no sin over which you cannot triumph. It is not the occasional sin that defeats a Christian. It is when you come to confess a sin that you committed yesterday, and the day before, and the day before that - that you have a hard time believing that God will forgive.